

WO-266  
Edward J. Gilliss House  
St. Martins  
Private

c. 1860

The Edward J. Gilliss house stands out in the small rural crossroads of St. Martins as the oldest extant dwelling. The two-story, center hall frame dwelling, built just prior to the Civil War, is distinctive for its hip roof, bracketed eave, and mid nineteenth century woodwork. The house is extended to the rear by a story-and-a-half dining room and service wing.

The house is reported to have been built by William or Lemuel Showell, both prominent land owners in northern Worcester County during the second half of the nineteenth century. Starting out as a small agriculture oriented crossroads by the second quarter of the nineteenth century, St. Martins developed into a modest village by the 1860s with the construction of the Wicomico & Pocomoke railroad through the village in 1868. By the time the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas was published in 1877 the village comprised a half dozen dwellings, a Methodist Episcopal church, a school, a railroad depot along with some freight houses. The railroad bed cut across the south lawn adjacent to this house. Edward J. Gilliss bought this property during the 1880s, and the house and lot have remained in Gilliss family hands to the present day.

HISTORIC CONTEXT INFORMATION

Resource Name: EDWARD J. GILLISS HOUSE

MHT Inventory Number: WO - 266

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA:

1) Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture

2) Geographic Orientation:

EASTERN SHORE

3) Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

1815-1870 Agricultural - Industrial Transition

4) Resource Type(s):

1. Stand-alone Structure

a. Dwelling

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. WO-266

Magi No. 2402665504

DOE \_\_yes \_\_no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic EDWARD J. GILLISS HOUSE

and/or common

## 2. Location

street &amp; number \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town St. Martins \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district First

state Maryland \_\_\_\_\_ county Worcester

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Mr. and Mrs. Robins Gilliss

street &amp; number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone no.: \_\_\_\_\_

city, town Berlin \_\_\_\_\_ state and zip code MD 21811

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Worcester County Clerk of Court liber

street &amp; number Worcester County Courthouse folio

city, town Snow Hill \_\_\_\_\_ state MD 21863

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title \_\_\_\_\_

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Edward J. Gilliss house stands in the small rural crossroads village of St. Martins, Worcester County, Maryland. The two-story, three-bay frame dwelling faces west with the hip roof oriented on a north/south axis.

Built around 1860, the two-story center hall frame dwelling is supported by a minimal brick foundation, and the weatherboard frame structure is sheathed with aluminum siding. The hip roof is covered with a layer of asphalt shingles. Attached to the back of the main block is a story-and-a-half dining room and kitchen wing.

The west (main) facade is a symmetrical three-bay elevation iwth a center sidelighted entrance and flanking six-over-six sash windows. The heavily molded four-panel front door is framed by three-light sidelights and a two-light transom. The windows are framed by slightly arched window surrounds. Sheltering the front entrance is a hip roof porch with replacement metal porch posts. The historic photograph of the dwelling taken around 1910 shows turned posts with decorative corner brackets. The second floor is evenly marked by three six-over-six sash windows which are framed by the same slightly arched surrounds. Trimming the eave are widely spaced brackets, and the corners of the house are marked by covered over pilasters.

The ends of the house are pierced by six-over-six sash windows, and rising through each end are stuccoed brick chimneys. The east (rear) side of the main block is largely covered by the story-and-a-half dining room and service wing. According to family history the dormers lighting the second floor were added around 1880-1890.

The interior has retained much of its third quarter of the nineteenth century woodwork. The center hall contains the original stair with a heavily turned newel post, a decorated stringer, and a molded handrail. Four-panel doors open into the adjacent rooms which are fitted with period mantels and baseboard. The second floor is finished in a plain manner without exceptional features. The original kitchen contained a large cooking hearth which was removed by the present owners when the renovation the space during the past thirty years.

## 8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

### Specific dates

### Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Edward J. Gilliss house is probably the oldest structure remaining in the small crossroads village of St. Martins in northern Worcester County. The two-story center hall frame dwelling follows a traditional vernacular house form and it is trimmed conservatively with mid nineteenth century details including a bracketed eave and slightly pedimented window surrounds. The interior is finished with standard mid nineteenth century woodwork. The house has been modified during the past generation with the application of aluminum siding and replacement porch posts.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. WO-266

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian

organization Worcester County date 9/15/89

street &amp; number Worcester County Courthouse telephone 632-1194

city or town Snow Hill state MD 21863

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
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WO-266

5960 (V.N.E.)  
(WHALEYSVILLE)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

